



Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

March 18, 2003

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a flu-like, respiratory illness with an unknown cause. Since Mid-February, the World Health Organization has been investigating outbreaks of SARS in Viet Nam, Hong Kong, and the Guangdong province in China, as well as suspect cases in Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Taiwan.

Q: What are the symptoms?

A fever of about 101, coughing and shortness of breath. Other possible symptoms include headache, muscular stiffness, loss of appetite, confusion, rash and diarrhea.

Q: How quickly can someone get the disease after being exposed to it?

One to seven days (average of 4 days).

Q: How does someone catch it?

It appears to spread through close contact, such as between family members or between patient and doctor. Experts believe it is spread through coughing, sneezing and other contact with nasal fluids.

Q: What causes it?

Researchers don't know whether it is caused by a bacteria or a virus, and they may not know the answer for several more days.

Q: What should I do if I suspect I have SARS?

Those who have traveled to Hong Kong or Guangdong province in China, or Hanoi, Vietnam, are being told to monitor their health for seven days for the main symptoms and signs of SARS which include high fever ($>100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$) AND one or more respiratory symptoms (including cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing). If a fever and shortness of breath develop, you should see a doctor. In the unlikely event that you experience this combination of symptoms, you should seek medical attention and inform the health care staff about your recent travel.

Q: What are the chances of recovering from SARS?

So far there are nine fatalities among the 170 most recent cases.

Q: Are there any reports of cases of SARS in the United States?

While CDC is carefully investigating reports of suspected illness, as of March 17, 2003, there have been no cases of SARS reported in the United States.

Q: Where did the disease first appear?

SARS was first recognized in Hanoi, Vietnam, on Feb. 26. An outbreak of pneumonia with similar symptoms struck Guangdong province, China, last November and was only brought under control in mid-February.

Q: Is it dangerous to travel in those regions?

WHO advises any traveler who develops these symptoms not to undertake further travel until they have recovered. CDC advises that persons planning nonessential travel to Hong Kong and Guangdong Province, China; and Hanoi, Vietnam, may wish to postpone their trips until further notice. For additional information on travel advisories, check www.cdc.gov/travel, which will be updated as necessary.

For additional information, visit the following websites: www.cdc.gov or www.who.int or call the Utah Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology at (801)538-6191

Source: World Health Organization; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.